

Message Text

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TAGS: OVIP (HABIB, PHILIP C.)
SUBJECT: UNDER SECRETARY HABIB'S VISIT TO GUYANA

REF: A. GEORGETOWN 1330 B. GEORGETOWN 1332

SUMMARY: PRESS COVERAGE OF UNDER SECRETARY HABIB'S VISIT HAS BEEN ENTIRELY POSITIVE--ALTHOUGH THE OPPOSITION PRESS HAS NOT YET COMMENTED--AND ALL FEEDBACK WE HAVE RECEIVED FROM OFFICIALS HAS BEEN LAUDATORY OF THE UNDER SECRETARY'S ATTITUDE AND PERFORMANCE. THE UNDER SECRETARY'S COMMENTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS, INCLUDING HIS INVITATION FOR GUYANA TO JOIN WITH THE US IN BRINGING ABOUT IMPROVEMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AROUND THE WORLD, RECEIVED PROMINENT ATTENTION. ALTHOUGH THE FULL IMPACT OF THE VISIT WILL BECOME CLEARER AS WE TALK TO MORE PEOPLE DURING THE NEXT WEEK, NO QUESTION EXISTS THAT IT MARKED ANOTHER SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT IN US-GUYANA RELATIONS AND UNDERSTANDING. END SUMMARY.

1. THIS CABLE IS AN INITIAL REPORT ON UNDER SECRETARY HABIB'S JUNE 19-21 VISIT TO GUYANA. IT OUTLINES THE MEETINGS HE HELD AND SOME INITIAL REACTIONS WE HAVE HEARD.

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2. ON MONDAY, JUNE 20, THE UNDER SECRETARY HELD A ONE HOUR MEETING WITH ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER HUBERT JACK DURING WHICH THE FULL GAMUT OF US-GUYANESE RELATIONS WERE DISCUSSED. THAT WAS FOLLOWED BY AN HOUR AND 15 MINUTE MEETING WITH MINISTER OF FINANCE FRANKLIN HOPE AND MINISTER OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DESMOND HOYTE, DURING

WHICH THE DISCUSSION FOCUSED ON GUYANA'S ECONOMIC SITUATION AND PROBLEMS INCLUDING GUYANA'S HOPES FOR ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE. THE ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER HOSTED A LUNCHEON FOR THE UNDER SECRETARY AT GUYBAU HOUSE. THE LUNCHEON WAS ATTENDED BY SENIOR MINISTERS AND OFFICIALS OF PUBLIC CORPORATIONS.

3. DURING THE AFTERNOON OF JUNE 20, THE UNDER SECRETARY MET FOR OVER THREE HOURS WITH PRIME MINISTER FORBES BURNHAM. THEIR CONVERSATION COVERED A WIDE RANGE OF SUBJECTS INCLUDING THE MIDDLE EAST, KOREA, PUERTO RICO, SOUTHERN AFRICA, THE EASTERN HORN OF AFRICA, DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE AND US-GUYANESE BILATERAL RELATIONS. THAT EVENING, THE UNDER SECRETARY ATTENDED A DINNER HOSTED BY THE US CHARGE AND ATTENDED BY CABINET MEMBERS AND OTHER GOG OFFICIALS, PERSONS FROM PUBLIC CORPORATIONS, LABOR AND PRIVATE SECTOR.

4. ON THE MORNING OF JUNE 21, THE UNDER SECRETARY HAD A HELICOPTER TRIP FROM GEORGETOWN ALONG THE COAST TO THE ESSEQUIBO RIVER, THEN INLAND TO THE UPPER MAZARUNI ROAD PROJECT. AFTER FLYING OVER A STRETCH OF THE ROAD, HE TRAVELLED OVER LINDEN, THE CENTER OF GUYANA'S BAUXITE MINING INDUSTRY, AND THEN FLEW TO THE COAST TO PASS OVER THE EXTENSIVE MAHAICA-MAHAICONY RICE FARMING AREA BEFORE RETURNING TO GEORGETOWN.
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5. COMMENT: UNQUESTIONABLY, THE GUYANESE WERE DELIGHTED WITH THE UNDER SECRETARY'S VISIT. HE IS THE HIGHEST US OFFICIAL EVER TO VISIT GUYANA (RUNNER-UP WAS ASSISTANT SECRETARY LINCOLN GORDON). HIS INTEREST, CANDID APPROACH, AND UNDERSTANDING RESPONSES WERE APPRECIATED BY ALL WITH WHO HE CAME IN CONTACT. THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE TERMINATION OF THE ATKINSON FIELD AIR BASE AGREEMENT AND THE NEWS THAT A NEW US AMBASSADOR WOULD BE APPOINTED SOON HAVE ELICITED COMMENTS OF GRATIFICATION FROM GUYANESE OFFICIALS. AS INDICATED IN USIA MEDIA REACTION REPORTS (GEORGETOWN 1330 AND 1332) THE UNDER SECRETARY RECEIVED EXTENSIVE PRESS COVERAGE DURING HIS VISIT AND ON JUNE 22 WAS THE SUBJECT OF THREE ARTICLES IN THE GOVERNMENT-OWNED GUYANA CHRONICLE (TWO WERE ON FRONT PAGE AND RECEIVED FEATURE BILLING).

6. INITIAL FEEDBACK INDICATES BURNHAM WAS HIGHLY PLEASED WITH HIS TALK WITH THE UNDER SECRETARY. INDICATIVE OF THE TONE OF THE COMMENTS WE HAVE RECEIVED WAS THE ASSERTION BY A FONMIN OFFICIAL THAT NEVER BEFORE IN HIS MEMORY HAD THE ENTIRE CABINET GATHERED IN A

DIPLOMAT'S HOME TO ATTEND A DINNER IN HONOR OF ANY
FOREIGN OFFICIAL. THE FONMIN OFFICIAL INDICATED THIS WAS
EVIDENCE OF THE IMPORTANCE GUYANA PLACED UPON THE UNDER
SECRETARY'S VISIT.
BLACKEN

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